INVESTOR'S BUSINESS DAILY®

SE Editorials

HD **Memo To Congress: French Riots Show Why U.S. Carbon Tax Should Be A Non-Starter**

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WC 1,255 words

PD 4 December 2018

SN Investor's Business Daily

SC INVDAI

LA English

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French Riots: They call themselves the "Gilets Jaunes," or yellow vests, in French. They're mostly young, male and extremely angry, and they've been marching in the streets and rioting in Paris and elsewhere, protesting yet another bunch of taxes on gasoline in the government's never-ending battle against global warming. Who says no one cares about climate change?

If you think of the French as people who will suffer any indignity in the name of more government, think again. Many young French, watching their standards of living decline under a socialist president's high taxes, are fed up. This latest round of taxes on already outrageous fuel prices was the proverbial straw breaking a dromedary's back.

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"A protest against rising taxes and the high cost of living turned into a riot in the French capital, as activists wearing yellow jackets torched cars, smashed windows, looted stores and tagged the Arc de Triomphe with multi-colored graffiti," the AP reported of Saturday's riots.

Some 263 people were injured, including dozens of police, and the government made hundreds of arrests, after an estimated 36,000 people took to the streets on Saturday. Even unions are upset, seeing possible damage to the economy from the demonstrations.

With a growing awareness it was losing the battle for public opinion, the French government on Tuesday folded, announcing it would "temporarily" suspend its carbon-tax plan, set to go into effect in January.

"No tax is worth putting in danger the unity of the nations," said French Prime Minister Edouard Philippe, announcing the suspension.

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French Riots: A Tax Revolt

That's quite a u-turn for the prideful French socialist government. But then, the whole experience of Socialist President Emannuel Macron finding out that not everything he believes is shared by average citizens has been humbling.

Macron no doubt was surprised when he was booed when he showed up at the demonstrations. His spokesman issued a thinly veiled threat that "all options" are on the table to stop the French riots. Turns out, "all options" included giving in to the demonstrators' main demand.

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French Prime Minister Philippe even canceled his trip to a global warming conference in Poland. That's something, given that France's leaders constantly claim global warming is humankind's most serious threat. Apparently, French riots rank higher.

No, we're not happy people rioted. But governments must learn they can't just jam things down people's throats, and expect them to like it. No one asked Macron to raise energy taxes. Macron and his government did it because, to them, globalism is more important than satisfying the demands of their own citizens. It's that simple.

Today, among all OECD nations, France has the second-highest rates of taxation. Only Denmark ranks higher. So people are fed up.

Nor is it just a "French thing." Macron is among a growing number of European leftist leaders who want to foist the anti-climate change agenda on their citizens as part of this new globalism. But this isn't kumbaya, feel-good globalism; it's one that will feature few if any individual rights, lots of taxes, shrinking standards of living, no real freedom, and little joy.

EU Über Alles

Across the border in Germany, soon-to-be-former German Chancellor Angela Merkel recently said that, on behalf of climate change and migration, "Countries must give up their sovereignty ... in an orderly fashion of course."

"Orderly," by the way, is a German euphemism for "by force, if needed."

For those who don't know, Macron and Merkel are the two strongest leaders in the EU. Their goal, stated outright, is to use the threat of global warming and unbridled migration to wrest control of their nations from their own people — whom they demonize as "populists" — and give it instead to the European Union.

The EU's record of economic incompetence, absurd regulation, excessive taxation, preening corruption and, increasingly, totalitarian behavior, are troubling to say the least.

Not everyone's buying in to this mandatory globalism. Both Switzerland and Italy have announced they'll not attend an EU meeting next month to adopt the U.N.'s new legal guidelines on migration. One big reason: The U.N. has now declared criticism of its pro-immigration policies "hate speech." Yes, that's how far we've come.

Carbon Tax, Coming Our Way

Should we care?

Yes, because leftists here have the same things in mind for all of us. The scientific holes in the climate change religion are enormous. Literally thousands of engineers, scientists, academics and Nobel Prize winners have criticized the flawed science behind the theory that we inevitably face disastrous over-heating of the planet.

Yet, some in Congress — including some Republicans — are eager to saddle Americans with a massive new "carbon tax." It's the modern equivalent of the medieval church granting indulgences for sins. For a fee, of course. Pay us, and your sins will be remitted.

The idea is that Americans will accept a high tax on energy if it's "rebated" on an equal basis to everyone. That way, we get less global warming gas emitted into our atmosphere, while reducing the scourge of unequal income. Win-win!

Except, as we've noted repeatedly in the past, that's not how it works.

"The superficial purpose, of course, is to make carbon-based fossil fuels more expensive to use," we wrote back in April. "But fossil fuels are a blessing, not a curse. They are in large part responsible for the record growth in the global economy in the past two centuries and especially over the last 18 years, helping to pull literally hundreds of millions of once-destitute people out of poverty."

We wouldn't change a word of that. And the idea of "rebates" is absurd. The U.S. would always be one election away from "rebates" turning into just another tax-grab by Congress for badly needed "climate

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remediation" or some other hokey purpose. Meanwhile, businesses affected by carbon taxes would hire fewer workers and invest less. It's a recipe for French-style stagnation.

Climate Change, Climate Yawn

Our just-released IBD/TIPP Poll shows what Americans think about all this. Just 17% ranked climate change as No. 1 or No. 2 on their list of priorities for the new Congress. Even so, some in Congress seek literally trillions of dollars in new taxes that will distort energy markets and hand rebates to those who don't even pay the taxes.

If no one likes the idea, why would Congress push it so hard? It's called "redistribution," and it's yet another socialist idea that will make people miserable. Ask France.

The U.S. shouldn't travel down France's road. Americans aren't stupid. They won't accept a massive new tax to prevent a threat they don't really believe in. We wonder: What will our Congress do if faced with mass demonstrations?

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AN Document INVDAI0020181204eec40008u

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